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The Kite Runner

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Summary:

It is now winter in Kabul, the most favored time of year for boys. The city holds kite-fighting tournaments that are held annually during each winter. The kites battle in the sky with shards of glass and other sharp objects on their strings. Each kite tries to eliminate the other kites by cutting the other’s strings loose. Once cut, the kites descend to the earth somewhere about the city. The boys who chase the falling kites to retrieve them are given the name the kite runner. The last kite left in the sky is called the winner. Hassan is known as one of the best kite runners in the city, and since Amir is competing, Hassan is Amir’s kite runner.

At the competition, Amir is looking for more than a win. Amir seeks to gain his father’s approval and the love of the city. Amir wins the competition and gains the acceptance of his father. Hassan goes to track down the kite but never comes back. When Amir goes looking for Hassan, he finds him in an alley being beaten and raped by Assef. Assef wanted the Amir’s winning kite, but Hassan’s loyalty would not give up the kite. Amir sees this, but stays at a distance and turns the other way. Later, Amir sees Hassan covered in blood and tears with the kite in his tears. Both boys remain silent about the subject, and their friendship begins to dwindle.

Amir and Hassan’s relationship begins to fade away and dissipate to nothing. Amir feels such a great deal of guilt and grief and believes that he is now an insomniac. He cannot sleep with the idea of Hassan being raped on his mind. One day, Hassan attempts to rekindle the friendship by asking Amir to read to him, but Amir ultimately declines. Hassan feels as though he has done nothing to harm Amir and is confused. With the constant guilt on Amir’s mind, he invites Hassan to their favorite place, the pomegranate tree, to read. Once there, Amir asks Hassan what his reaction would be if he threw a pomegranate at him. Amir soon begins throwing pomegranates at Hassan and demands him to return fire. Hassan, distraught, picks up a pomegranate and crushes it on his own forehead and walks away.

Soon after, Baba hosts a thirteenth birthday party for Amir, with over 400 attendees. At the party Amir feels such sadness, but is approached by Rahim Khan. He tells Amir of a time when he almost married a Hazara woman. When his family found out, they forced the Hazara family out of the city. Ultimately, Rahim thinks that it was the best decision for the long run of events. He knows that getting too involved with Hazarans can lead to difficult situations.

Amir comes to the realization that both Amir and Hassan can no longer live in the home together. He thinks that one of them must leave, so he plots a plan to frame Hassan for stealing his presents and money. When Baba confronts Hassan about stealing Amir’s possessions, he admits to it. Though his is forgiven, Ali insists that he and Hassan must leave at once. It is now that Amir realizes that Hassan must have witnessed Amir at the scene of the rape.

Analysis:

In this section it is seen how strong Hassan’s loyalty really is. The reader sees how Hassan takes on the role of being a true Hazaran boy. He understands his place and does not stray from it. Though Amir is a terrible friend and servant owner, Hassan sticks to his tier in society. Hassan is truly a loyal servant in that he was willing to be beaten and raped solely to keep a hold of Amir’s kite. However, Amir cannot return the favor to Hassan because he has begun to be corrupted into thinking that Hazaran people are worthless. Amir begins treating Hassan terribly which is saddening to read due to the will power of Hassan. If Amir could truly see how much Hassan sacrifices for him, he would be more grateful. Since Amir is blinded by the stereotype being forced upon him about the Hazarans, he feels great pain internally, but cannot act upon it. It is ironic that the Hazaran people, who are thought to be weak, are actually far stronger and have great will power and loyalty than the Pashtuns. In the same way, the Pashtuns who are thought to be stronger are actually more cowardly, as seen in Amir’s actions.

Application:

When analyzing the human characteristics that span time and culture, this passage, again shows how people all over the earth from different backgrounds can act in the exact same ways. In the section where Amir witnesses the raping of Hassan, the turning point of the story, he turns the other way and walks away. Because Amir could have potentially not been seen, he walks away from the potentially threatening situation. There is a term in psychology that is called the bystander effect. This refers to an instance when there is a potentially dangerous situation that is happening in plain sight, but no witnesses act out to spot the event, because of the fact that no one else is. However in the end, the people do feel partially responsible. In the same way, Amir feels guilt and responsibility because he chose not to act out in the event. From both situations, it is in common view that the human characteristics of turning away from danger and feeling guilty on the latter do span time and culture.